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Resilience in peacebuilding: Contesting uncertainty, ambiguity, and complexity

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ABSTRACT

With the failure of liberal peace strategies in the Global South, resilience has recently become the risk management strategy *par excellence* in peacebuilding. Since it is not possible to predict when the next crisis will take place, peacebuilders must invest in bottom-up adaptive capacities to cope with external shocks. This article moves away from governmentality accounts of resilience which are overtly deterministic and depoliticizing. Instead, it posits that the uncertainty, ambiguity, and complexity associated with resilience mean that we should expect opportunities for contestation and institutional agency. This argument will be illustrated by drawing upon the European Union's adoption of the resilience approach in its peacebuilding and security policies. The article argues that while uncertainty, ambiguity, and complexity constitute the ontological conditions that underpin the rise of resilience in peacebuilding, they are also likely to lead to its potential demise.

KEYWORDS Resilience; peacebuilding; contestation; uncertainty; ambiguity; complexity

The advent of a "risk society" (Beck, 1992) has transformed international contemporary interventions in the Global South. Following the tropes of uncertainty, ambiguity, and complexity, resilience has now become the risk management strategy *par excellence* in peacebuilding and humanitarian interventions. Since it is not possible to predict when or where the next crisis will take place in a context of deep uncertainty, ambiguity, and complexity, international peacebuilders must invest in local, bottom-up adaptive capacities to cope with and adapt to external disturbances and shocks. This article will argue that uncertainty, ambiguity, and complexity have become the ontological conditions that underpin the rise of resilience. It will also show how they are likely to lead to resilience's potential demise.

Theoretically, this article takes as a starting point the critical scholarship on resilience as a new form of neoliberal governmentality. Yet, it moves away

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from this deterministic, depoliticizing, and deeply pessimistic account to argue that the uncertainty, ambiguity, and complexity associated with resilience mean that we should expect unintended consequences to open up spaces for contestation and institutional agency. This will be demonstrated by examining the implementation of resilience and how, as part of this process, we can observe instances of decoupling, slippage, and resistance, which in turn can be linked to the ontological and epistemological conditions that underpin resilience in peacebuilding.

I will begin this article with an overview of the rise of resilience in peacebuilding. I will then examine the critical scholarship on resilience which conceives resilience as a new form of (neoliberal) governance in modern politics. I will suggest that such conceptualizations neglect the possibility of contestation and agency. Instead, I will show that, as a result of uncertainty, ambiguity, and complex institutional settings, what we might see is a very different implementation of resilience, including instances of resistance. It is partly these processes of contestation that explain the gap between resilience discourses and international practice, which might result in the failure of this approach and its potential demise. In developing these arguments, I will draw on the example of the European Union (EU) and how it has sought to adopt and implement resilience in its foreign and security policies.[1]

From liberal peace to resilience: Peacebuilding as risk management

Throughout the 1990s and 2000s, international interventions attempted to address conflicts in the Global South by focusing on statebuilding, strengthening state institutions, and creating the conditions for free elections and free markets, as a way to promote peacebuilding (Paris, 2004). However, the failure of universalist and externally imposed liberal peace strategies led to a rethink of international intervention (Chandler, 2014). This shift in contemporary interventionary strategies was to be linked to new ideas of uncertainty, ambiguity, and complexity which would converge around the new concept of resilience.

Such transformation can already be observed in the establishment of the 2004 United Nations (UN) High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges, and Change (United Nations, 2004). The focus of the report was on the protection of populations and the prevention of threats, but this was articulated through a new emphasis on international threats as "shared vulnerabilities" and "international security as risk management" (Zanotti, 2010, p. 10). Risks were now understood as systemic risks, embedded in larger, more complex societal processes and whose probabilities were difficult to calculate (as opposed to simple risks) (Renn, Klinke, & Van Asselt, 2011). The key assumption was that, given the difficulty of predicting and calculating risk, the focus should be on prevention. Moreover, in the context of a risk society of temporally and spatially

de-bounded risks, failed or fragile states were seen as "risky" states in need of risk management techniques (Clapton & Hameiri, 2012).

It is possible to trace the emergence of resilience back to the abovementioned initial shift, as the focus of peacebuilding practice shifted to incorporate the management of systemic risks. Drawing on ecological understandings of society as a system in constant change, resilience is conceptualized as "a measure of the ability of these systems to absorb changes of state variables, driving variables and parameters, and still persist" (Holling, 1973, p. 17). This presupposes the acceptance of contingency and uncertainty—and thus risk—in complex systems. While the use of the resilience concept was initially limited to systems ecology and biology, it is now widely applied in other areas including peacebuilding, but also climate change, disaster response, development, and humanitarian aid (see Chandler & Coaffee, 2017).

Resilience marks a shift from a logic focused on known threats to a new governmental logic which emphasizes complexity, uncertainty, and ambiguity, and therefore the impossibility of predicting threats (Corry, 2014). Under resilience, the post-Cold War world of enemies is replaced by a world of risks (Clapton & Hameiri, 2012). In this vein, the EU's Joint Communication on resilience advocates "the need to move away from crisis containment to a more structural, long-term, non-linear approach to vulnerabilities, with an emphasis on anticipation, prevention and preparedness" and recognizes that "development, and progress towards democracy, peace and security, is not a linear process" (European Commission and High Representative of the EU, 2017, pp. 2, 23). Resilience requires us to be prepared for unknown systemic risks. It posits adaptation, learning by doing and flexibility as a way to respond to shocks, to embrace change and to live with rather than completely eliminate uncertainty, ambiguity, and complexity (Evans & Reid, 2014).

In peacebuilding, resilience is also linked to a new understanding of the world and a recognition of the failures and limitations of past interventionist practices (Joseph, 2016). These are times of deep uncertainty or, in the words of the EU Global Strategy (EUGS), "we live in times of existential crisis, within and beyond the European Union. Our Union is under threat. Our European project, which has brought unprecedented peace, prosperity and democracy, is being questioned" (High Representative of the EU, 2016, p. 7). The latter also emphasizes the role played by ambiguity, understood here as a situation where there are different value-based perspectives regarding the severity of a particular threat (Renn et al., 2011). Complexity is at the heart of new resilience approaches too (de Coning, 2016). Given a "more connected, contested and complex world" (EEAS, 2015), we need to focus on building the resilience of governments, communities, and individuals (Council of the EU, 2013, p. 1). Moreover, risk and resilience are said to be closely connected. According to the EU's Joint Communication, "resilience requires risk-informed programming. Action to address the underlying diverse causes of fragility should be

accompanied with risk management measures to protect populations from shocks and stresses" (European Commission and High Representative of the EU, 2017, p. 24).

In sum, resilience acknowledges deep uncertainty, ambiguity, and complexity as contemporary conditions. Rather than resorting to external intervention as was the case in the past, resilience discourses emphasize internal capabilities as the best way to deal with these challenges. Resilience, understood as "the internal capacity of societies to cope with crises, with the emphasis on the development of self-organization and internal capacities and capabilities rather than the external provision of aid, resources or policy solutions" (Chandler, 2015, p. 13), fits with people-centered approaches and the "local turn" in peacebuilding (Ejdus & Juncos, 2018). It is also in line with new approaches to peacebuilding as "sustaining peace" (de Coning, 2016). Resilience thus operates a turn from the international to the local (governments, societies, organizations, and individuals), which is now (made) responsible for managing and engaging with systemic risks. The key question here asks what, if any, are the implications of the adoption of resilience as a risk management strategy. The next section explores some tentative explanations.

Resilience as neoliberal governmentality

The new focus on risk and resilience at the international level has been linked to particular forms of governance (Best, 2008; O'Malley, 2004). Processes of governance appear increasingly concerned with managing risk and by doing so resort to particular technologies of government and constitute particular subjects. In the case of peacebuilding, it has been argued that "international security is pursued through the intensification of techniques of government aimed at knowing, monitoring and taming a plurality of sources of danger that could combine in unpredictable manners, including those that affect, or are created by, populations" (Zanotti, 2010, p. 21). According to these critical accounts, the rise of resilience is closely connected with neoliberal forms of governance, better understood as governmentality (Joseph, 2014). Governmentality, defined as "the conduct of conduct," is a form of government that takes populations as its main target, political economy as its main form of knowledge and apparatuses of security as the main technical means at its disposal (Foucault, 2007, p. 108). Liberal governmentality works from a distance by seeking to govern through consent, self-regulation, and individual responsibilization rather than direct imposition. It is the fit with these neoliberal forms of power that explains the spread of resilience. As explained by Walker and Cooper (2011), "the success of this ecological concept in colonizing multiple arenas of governance is due to its intuitive ideological fit with a neoliberal philosophy of complex adaptive systems" (p. 153).

While the critical approach articulated above helps us understand resilience's emphasis on reflexivity, responsibility, preparedness, and adaptability at the individual level, it has also been criticized for painting a picture of resilience that is all-oppressing and unstoppable. This view ignores contingency and unintended consequences, and it forecloses opportunities for agency and resistance. In fact, this follows a tendency in the governmentality literature to create a dichotomy between those governing and the subjects of governance, allowing little room for agency—with subjects appearing as passive objects of liberal governmentality (Bevir, 2011). However, as argued elsewhere, resilience does not have to be exclusively tied to a neoliberal logic or ruling out resistance (Corry, 2014; Dunn Cavelty, Kaufmann, & Søby Kristensen, 2015; Schmidt, 2015); in some cases, it might even assist resistance practices (Bourbeau & Ryan, 2018; Ryan, 2015).

This article contributes to this literature by focusing on resilience-building approaches in peacebuilding. It argues that by examining the adoption of resilience in peacebuilding, it is possible to detect many opportunities for agency and contestation (see also Dunn Cavelty et al., 2015). Such an analysis pays more attention to agency, contingency, and heterogeneity in resilience approaches than previous governmentality studies of resilience have. In this regard, some of the peacebuilding scholarships has already demonstrated how uncertainty and ambiguity have undermined the implementation of the liberal peace (Autesserre, 2014; Pouligny, 2006). As put by Zanotti (2010), "practical implementations of the script of international governance are ridden with ambiguities, indecision and continuous contingent and context-specific negotiations of divergent sets of principles and practical necessities" (p. 19). This ambiguity and uncertainty open up opportunities for contestation.

To illustrate the broader implementation of resilience approaches in peacebuilding, the article examines the adoption of resilience in the EU and how, as part of this process, we can observe instances of decoupling and contestation. It is the ontological and epistemological conditions associated with resilience (uncertainty, ambiguity, and complexity) that help explain such departures from the resilience "script." First, uncertainty explains gaps in the implementation of resilience approaches resulting in decoupling; second, ambiguity explains how the malleability of the resilience term leads to contestation; finally, the complexity that led to the adoption of an integrated approach in the first place prevents the effective implementation of resilience approaches in peacebuilding.

While others have focused on the agency of those at the recipient end of resilience initiatives, that is, the communities or populations that are made resilient (e.g., Corry, 2014; Dunn Cavelty et al., 2015; Ryan, 2015), the focus here is on institutional agency, that is, the implementing agents that are responsible for the operationalization of resilience programs. In the case of

the EU and its new resilience approach, institutional agency resurfaces as a way to deal with uncertainty, ambiguity, and complexity and provides evidence of contestation and sometimes resistance to broader international discourses of resilience. The sections below examine these processes of contestation by drawing on the notions of uncertainty, ambiguity, and complexity.

Uncertainty and the emergence of a new resilience paradigm

At the core of the resilience approach rests a deep ontological and epistemological uncertainty. First, the world appears to be complex, with structures, causes, and processes seen as nonlinear. This is compounded by an "epistemological denial that we can have any trust in our knowledge of this world" (Joseph, 2016, p. 379). Coping with uncertainty requires new modes of analysis that go beyond our dominant sets of knowledge. This sense of uncertainty is exacerbated by the failure of liberal approaches to peacebuilding.

It is the ontological and epistemological uncertainty outlined above that partly explains why resilience has been adopted as the main approach in peacebuilding by a number of international organizations. According to DiMaggio and Powell (1983), under conditions of uncertainty, we should expect mimetic isomorphism; in other words, we can expect to see organizations imitating or following the model of other organizations in the same field. The adoption of such models can also have a ritual aspect: enhancing the legitimacy of the new organization by adopting the models of other organizations (in this case, the UN) that are perceived as more legitimate or successful in an uncertain context (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983, p. 152; Meyer & Rowan, 1977).

Under conditions of uncertainty, most international organizations including the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the UN, and the World Bank have adopted resilience as the main solution to past intervention failures. Thus, the UN's "sustaining peace" agenda, which puts emphasis on building local resilience, is driven by increasing geopolitical uncertainty (de Coning, 2018). By promoting particular organizational reforms (the adoption of joint analyses, an integrated approach, risk analysis, etc.), resilience has become a new modern "management paradigm" (Garschagen, 2013, p. 31). The EU has been one of the last international organizations to incorporate resilience as a new foreign policy paradigm (Juncos, 2017) and as a way to respond to the challenge of "how to sustain progress in the transformational agenda the EU has set itself, against a backdrop of a more connected, contested and complex global environment" (European Commission and High Representative of the EU, 2017, p. 2). Yet, this approach has been adopted without a clear assessment in place regarding whether it actually improves the effectiveness of international

interventions. As an EU official explained, there are some OECD and Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) analyses available, "but we haven't done it ourselves and this covers/focuses on different instruments/issues, we don't have a comprehensive assessment" (Interview 2). This suggests that the endeavor to achieve legitimacy, rather than effectiveness, might be one of the reasons why the EU seeks to adopt a resilience approach in the face of uncertainty.

Importantly, the implementation of resilience might result in unexpected consequences because of decoupling. This notion takes a more agentic perspective, whereby actors can strategize or manage institutional constraints, leading to a decoupling of practices from formal structures. The gap between rhetoric and practice results from the fact that, although organizations seek to adopt institutional myths as part of their organizational agendas and policies, they rarely align their institutional practice with new organizational discourses (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). Decoupling allows organizations to maintain the legitimacy that comes with the adoption of those international paradigms, without substantially changing their practices. Decoupling might have to do with a lack of resources or the existence of competing institutional demands; in other cases, it has to do with a lack of willingness to adopt or even active resistance toward new approaches. This suggests that while resilience might be understood as neoliberal governance, the technologies of governing and processes required to implement such an approach might never be adopted by organizations, hence undermining its implementation.

This argument can be aptly illustrated by the example of the EU, although other organizations such as the UN also face similar problems (de Coning, 2018). While resilience discourses have generally been adopted in EU foreign policy—see, for instance, the EUGS and the new Joint Communication on resilience—the operationalization of these discourses continues to be very limited because this would require significant institutional reforms and a much more adaptive and responsive foreign policy. In practice, there are many institutional constraints that prevent the implementation of the resilience approach by the EU. The consensus-building nature of the EU's foreign policy decision-making tends to make the adoption of decisions slow. Moreover, the fragmentation of EU financial instruments and burdensome procurement rules have been criticized for negatively affecting the responsiveness of aid delivery and the implementation of its civilian and military operations (Interviews 2, 3, and 7). EU budgetary programs are multiannual and project-specific, thus preventing the implementation of resilience, which requires adaptability, flexibility, and so on (Interviews 1, 2, and 7).

Importantly, officials can resist or slow down the implementation of the EU's resilience approach, making decoupling more likely in the short- and medium-term. As argued by an interviewee, "many [EU officials] will say,

'this is something new, why should we now adopt this new approach?' This is only going to mean more work for them, especially for the [EU] Delegations" (Interview 1). According to another interviewee, EU officials will not be willing to adopt a new approach unless there are some incentives in return, but the implementation of resilience is a long-term process and it is difficult to incorporate such incentives in the short-term (Interview 2). Decoupling is also more likely to take place where there are conflicting demands or where there is ambiguity about goals or the environment. Hence, it is not surprising to see decoupling in the case of resilience given how ambiguous the concept is. It is to this issue that the next section turns.

Ambiguity: Contesting resilience

In a world of complexity and deep uncertainty, there is also more room for ambiguity. Ambiguity refers to value contestation and the existence of ambivalent perspectives regarding a particular risk phenomenon, which might in turn make risk assessments more difficult to conduct accurately (Renn et al., 2011). While resilience can be seen as a strategy to deal with this indeterminacy, many scholars have pointed to the conceptual ambiguity surrounding the term "resilience" itself, which results in profound confusion and might undermine its implementation (Brand & Jax, 2007; Walsh-Dilley & Wolford, 2015).

The conceptual malleability of resilience is key in explaining its widespread adoption. For Brand and Jax (2007), resilience has become a "boundary object," a concept that enables interdisciplinary conversations, even where each discipline/actor might have different understandings of the term. Such concepts facilitate communication and collaborations bringing different scientific communities together to discuss common challenges. In the case of the EU, Wagner and Anholt (2016, p. 417) refer to the "constructive ambiguity" of resilience as a positive element that can be used to bridge different approaches in the EU's external action. For some, the ambiguous nature of the concept has facilitated cooperation between traditionally separated fields, as represented by the humanitarian, development, and foreign policy communities (Interviews 8 and 9). Just like in the case of UN peacebuilding, the inclusion of resilience in the EUGS and the new Joint Communication seeks to enable a more united approach among these different policy communities.

There are other political considerations that favor the use of the term resilience, which are linked to the ambiguity or blurred nature of the concept. By contrast to other concepts such as "failed states" and "fragile states," which have been strongly criticized by partner countries as stigmatizing (Grimm, 2014, p. 258), resilience acts as an "affective force": a productive force shaping subjects and communities. Just like the concept of "capacity building," resilience not only has an ability to travel, it can also instill optimism

about the future and build confidence on ones' capacities (Gabay & Ilcan, 2017). The ambiguity associated with resilience has also appealed to nontraditional international donors such as China and Turkey. As summarized by Pospisil and Kühn (2016), "diverse interests require the amplification of reference concepts, and resilience allows for all those actors new to the scene of international assistance to find their epistemological niche" (p. 8).

Despite positive elements mentioned above, boundary objects such as resilience can also have negative consequences and "in fact be a hindrance to scientific progress" (Brand & Jax, 2007). This is particularly the case where the meaning of the concept is diluted and stretched so far that it becomes meaningless. The multiple meanings associated with resilience might therefore result in resilience becoming an "empty concept" (de Milliano & Jurriens, 2016).

Problems relating to the ambiguity of the concept affect many different organizations operating in the area of peacebuilding and humanitarian aid. Different policy communities (development, humanitarian, and security/foreign policy) hold different interpretations of resilience which also shape the way they implement this concept in their peacebuilding practice (de Milliano & Jurriens, 2016). In the case of the EU, these problems are particularly visible given its institutional fragmentation. This is one of the reasons why the Joint Communication does not put forward a single definition of resilience, instead referring to definitions in Commission documents and the EUGS (see European Commission and High Representative of the EU, 2017, p. 3). The differences are not just semantic in nature, but deeper than that, which is why EU officials repeatedly refer to the existence of different "mindsets," "communities" of officials, or even "cultures" in EU foreign policy (Interviews 1, 6, 7, and 9).

Yet, the ambiguity associated with resilience not only enables governance but also resistance and contestation, with some actors trying to set some boundaries to avoid discursive or practical slippages. In a complex and uncertain world, conceptual ambiguity exacerbates value contestation. For example, development actors are concerned that the adoption of the resilience vocabulary by foreign and security actors might disguise the securitization of development (Interview 7); for their part, humanitarian actors are concerned about how this might challenge the neutrality and impartiality of humanitarian aid (Interview 6). Ambiguity can thus prevent the effective operationalization of resilience by concealing conflicts of interests. Grimm (2014) argues that conceptual ambiguity (e.g., in the case of the concept of "fragility") can reduce the EU's capacity to respond to international conflicts and crises. For Pospisil (2018), the ambiguity attached to resilience has a "dark side as it only serves to 'obscure the weakness of the EU to do strategy'" (p. 34).

Therefore, ambiguity can be seen as "an object of governance" (Best, 2008, p. 363). It can be exploited to achieve particular aims, with some actors

promoting/prioritizing particular understandings of resilience that might strengthen their relative position. While those dealing with humanitarian and development policies are more familiar and more inclined to promote long-term, community-based, and bottom-up understandings of resilience, those dealing with foreign policy and security policies have often prioritized state-level resilience (or even stability) and are more skeptical of what a resilience approach can achieve (Interview 1). In sum, the ambiguity surrounding resilience can trigger contestation within what is already a very fragmented policy community, in turn affecting its implementation.

Complexity: Implementing an integrated approach

The final condition shaping the implementation of resilience is that of complexity. Peacebuilding as risk management is closely connected with complexity and a new emphasis on an integrated approach. In line with new risk governance approaches (Renn et al., 2011), spatially and temporally unbounded risks require a comprehensive or integrated response to be effective. As argued by Zanotti (2010), international spaces are "rethought as a space of interconnected vulnerabilities, and as the point of application of an array of biopolitical practices of government aimed at taming multifarious threats to the equilibrium of processes of populations living together" (pp. 21–22). The complex nature of contemporary conflicts requires a multidimensional, multiphased, multilevel, and multilateral approach (High Representative of the EU, 2016, pp. 28–29). The EU's Joint Communication on resilience also acknowledges that:

> For any given outcome, risk—and the ability to cope—needs to be analysed at multiple levels, particularly at the points at which one factor of resilience, or one set of actors is dependent on the resilience of others, or where power relations between different levels of society play an important role. (European Commission and High Representative of the EU, 2017, p. 24)

Risk management requires not only an integrated response at the organizational level but also coordination with other actors on the ground. In the case of UN peacebuilding, holistic interventions are conceived by way of

> taming risk as an undertaking it cannot perform alone, but that can only be carried out by integrating and regulating an array of international and local constituencies, such as regional organizations, the local police, NGOs, the private sector and more. (Zanotti, 2010, p. 22)

Such thinking is at the core of the "integrated mission" concept, which in turn has shaped other organizations understanding of comprehensive security interventions such as the EU or North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Resilience thus becomes a "virtual black hole" (Pospisil & Kühn, 2016, p. 7), sucking into its vortex a range of policies from humanitarian,

development, and foreign and security policy. Furthermore, resilience keeps expanding its scope by reaching out to other internal policies such as civil protection, migration, and counter-terrorism to achieve coherence between external and internal policies (see European Commission and High Representative of the EU, 2017).

What it is interesting about resilience is that while complexity justifies this new approach, the very existence of complexity undermines the implementation of resilience. The complexity of international peacebuilding interventions regarding causes, actors, and diverging political agendas simply makes this venture an impossible mission in practice (Zanotti, 2010, pp. 22–24). A particular case in point is the integration between humanitarian, development, and foreign/security policies.

While the advent of resilience seeks to bridge the gaps between short-term (humanitarian) and long-term approaches to crises (development), problems remain. This is usefully illustrated by the case of the EU. Here, resilience-building seeks to promote joint action between humanitarian, development, environmental and security policies as well as between internal and external security policies (European Commission and High Representative of the EU, 2017, p. 2, p. 15). Resilience also implies working on different levels (individual, community, state, regional, and global) (Interview 1). Resilience has thus become a proxy for coherence for an actor which has been endlessly criticized for problems of (in)coherence in its external action (Juncos, 2013). From this perspective, resilience is understood not as a goal, but as an approach: "resilience is not a new objective (like preventing violent conflicts is), but a way of operating—more specifically, a transversal approach; one that focuses on risk identification, endogenous capacities, dealing with communities and individuals" (Interview 2; also Interview 6).

However, it is also possible to identify some unintended consequences linked to the implementation of an integrated approach. By emphasizing the need to bring together a range of actors, including local actors and NGOs, under the guise of local ownership, the new integrated approach might end up opening new pathways for contestation (Zanotti, 2010). According to Interview 6, "the humanitarian community and the development community are still two different voices, their objectives are not always the same, this is why they have different portfolios, different objectives, different instruments (financial, etc.)." By linking emergency aid to longer-term preparedness, this might hinder the impartiality, neutrality, and independence of EU humanitarian aid, something which has caused "a general genuine concern, which is not entirely new, with the integrated approach" (Interview 6). Some EU actors are thus suspicious of the resilience approach, as they see it as a way for others to encroach upon their respective areas of competence, or even to endanger their mission/mandates. Tensions are encouraged not only by the distinct mandates established by the EU Treaties

which prevent further integration of development and humanitarian policies but also by the existence of different communities of practice, each operating according to their own interests and methodologies (Interviews 3, 6, and 7). Hence, there is still a lot of suspicion of, or even open resistance toward the implementation of resilience in EU foreign policy, especially where this might entail horizontal or vertical integration.

Conclusion

This article has demonstrated how peacebuilding has recently become a risk management strategy and has illustrated the role resilience has played in this transformation. The article has sought to complement perspectives that have characterized resilience as a new form of neoliberal governance. By analyzing the way resilience is adopted and conceptualized at the institutional level, it is possible to realize how resilience discourses often produce unintended consequences that weaken governing practices. The analysis employed by this article was grounded on the notions of uncertainty, ambiguity, and complexity. While these are at the core of the new resilience thinking, it is also these ontological conditions that undermine its implementation. Resilience engenders contestation and resistance because of its attendant uncertainty, ambiguity, and complexity. Empirically, while this article provides some illustrations based on the example of the EU, further research would need to expand this analysis to other international organizations involved in peacebuilding.

Unintended consequences and contestation might help explain why despite the shift in rhetoric to resilience-building and local ownership, international governance practices have not changed significantly. While it is true that the implementation of resilience has been accompanied by the withdrawal of international actors and consequently the proliferation of more remote forms of intervention (Duffield, 2010), the adoption of resilience has not translated into substantive local ownership or more bottom-up peacebuilding approaches (Ejdus, 2017). In many cases, local actors, in particular, civil society actors, continue to be sidelined from the process of designing and implementing peacebuilding activities. Instead, the main changes relate to organizational and institutional practices, including an increased focus on an integrated/joint/comprehensive approach to peacebuilding as a way to manage/govern risk through joint shared analysis, joint programming, and implementation. Further research could focus on how the processes of contestation identified in this article have shaped the actual implementation of the resilience programs of different international actors. For instance, how does decoupling affect the way international actors behave on the ground? And how does the gap between rhetoric and peacebuilding practices undermine their legitimacy *vis-à-vis* local actors? How have local actors exploited the uncertainty, ambiguity, and complexity associated with resilience?

Finally, it might also be worth examining in more detail the spaces of contestation that the implementation of resilience, and more specifically its emphasis on an integrated approach, has opened up at the local level.

Note

1. The empirical evidence for this article draws on EU official documents, as well as nine semistructured qualitative interviews with diplomats and officials from the European Commission (the Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development (DEVCO) and European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO)), the European External Action Service, and EU Delegations. The interviews were conducted face-to-face and over the phone between September 2017 and January 2018. They are coded to maintain the anonymity of the interviewees.

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